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GENESIS 2:2

THE SCRIPTURE CONCERNED

> And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and HE RESTED on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it HE HAD RESTED from all his work which God created and made. (Genesis 2:2-3 AV)

THE MEANING PEOPLE DRAW FROM THIS TRANSLATION

Because these verses say that God "rested", therefore people assume that the main focus of the Sabbath is "to rest". The religious Jews in Israel today have gone to the extreme of preventing people from making even the simplest movements, which could be interpreted as "work", on the Sabbath. For example, carrying more than the weight of a dried fig was considered "carrying a burden" according to the Talmud.

THE MISTRANSLATION

The Hebrew verb translated as "rested" in the above verses is "shabath", from which the noun "shabbath" is formed. But the verb "shabath" does NOT mean "to rest"!

The verb "shabath" really means "TO CEASE DOING SOMETHING"! It means: "to come to an end, to terminate, to conclude"; but it does not mean "to rest"! The antonym for "shabath" is NOT "to work"; the correct antonym for "shabath" is "TO START"!

Jewish scholars know quite well that the Hebrew verb "shabath" means "to cease doing something", but they have ADDED THE MEANING of "to rest" to this verb. In a sense, they have simply "extended" the meaning of this verb. But that added meaning, that extension, is not really correct! The reason why Jewish scholars of old added this meaning of "to rest" to the verb "shabath" is TO UPHOLD THEIR TRADITIONS REGARDING THE SABBATH!

It is a trick that was commonly used by the "tannaim", the Jewish sages of the first and second centuries, simply assigning an additional totally new meaning to a biblical Hebrew word, for the explicit purpose of supporting their own teachings, which were in conflict with the actual biblical instructions.

Of the better-known English translations only Young's Literal Translation (YLT) has retained the correct meaning of this verb. Here is that translation:

> and God completeth by the seventh day His work which He hath made, AND CEASETH by the seventh day from all His work which He hath made. And God blesseth the seventh day, and sanctifieth it, for in it HE HATH CEASED from all His work which God had prepared for making. (Genesis 2:2-3 YLT)

The emphasis in Genesis 2:2-3 is not on "resting", but on the cessation of the activities God had

engaged in up to that point in time. "Resting" is often a consequence of "ceasing to do things", though not necessarily always. Nor does the cessation of some activities preclude the continuation of other activities. It is always the context in which the Hebrew verb "shabath" is used that makes this clear.

This matter is explained in great detail in my article "FURTHER UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE SABBATH COMMANDMENT", located in the main article directory of this website. See also the other article entitled "REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY" in that directory.

THE SOURCE OF THIS WRONG TRANSLATION

The Greek language LXX translation correctly twice translated the Hebrew verb "shabath" in Genesis 2:2-3 into Greek as "katepausen", which means "to cease". Meanwhile the Jewish sages, known as tannaim, added the meaning of "to rest" to the verb "shabath" in order to justify their traditions regarding the Sabbath.

Then, when Jerome prepared his Latin language Vulgate translation of the Bible, Jerome translated the verb "shabath" in Genesis 2:2-3 with TWO different Latin words. In Genesis 2:2 he rendered "shabath" as "requievit", which means "TO REST". In the next verse Jerome translated "shabath" as "cessaverat", which means "TO CEASE, TO STOP".

So where the Greek language LXX had retained the correct meaning of "shabath", the Latin language Vulgate modified this by introducing the idea of "TO REST", while still acknowledging in the next verse that this Hebrew verb really does mean "TO CEASE".

The translators of the early English versions depended totally on the Vulgate as their source document, and so they simply accepted the meaning of "to rest" for both occurrences in these two verses. Other subsequent translations into English then simply followed this precedent, except for Young's Literal Translation. The correct thing would have been for the early English translators to have chosen the meaning of the Latin word "cessaverat" (to cease) for both occurrences in these two verses.

THE CORRECT TRANSLATION

> And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and HE CEASED on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it HE HAD CEASED from all his work which God created and made. (Genesis 2:2-3)

THE MEANING OF THIS CORRECT TRANSLATION

The focus of Genesis 2:2-3 is clearly on the cessation of activity. God "ceased from all His work". Resting is a consequence of this cessation, but resting is NOT the direct subject or focus of these verses. Yes, resting is without question a part of the Sabbath; but there is also much more to the Sabbath than just resting. It is the later statement in Exodus 20:11, where the expression "and RESTED the seventh day" uses the verb "nuwach" rather than the verb "shabath", that brings "resting" into the picture.

IN SUMMARY

We cannot use Genesis 2:2-3 to claim that God instructed us "to rest" on the Sabbath. These verses say nothing at all about resting. It is Exodus 20:11 that first introduces the idea of "resting". See also the longer articles mentioned above.